CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method, comprising:

receiving and answering a call at a local call center; and

determining at the local call center whether the call needs to be routed to a

remote call center according to interactions between a caller and an interactive

application executing at the local call center.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein if the call needs to be routed to the remote

call center, then bridging the call with a proxy connection in the remote call

center via a communication channel established over a network coupled between

the local call center and the remote call center.

3.   The method of claim 2, wherein bridging the call comprises:

establishing a connection between the proxy connection in the remote call

center and the network; and

establishing a connection between the call in the local call center and the

network.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein some or all of the interactive application

is downloaded to the local call center from the remote call center.

5.   The method of claim 4, wherein the interactive application is downloaded using a data network coupled between the local call center and the remote call center.

6.   The method of claim 1, further comprising signaling the remote call center via a data network coupled between the local call center and the remote call center to request that a telephone connection be established in the remote call center when it is determined a connection to the remote call center is necessary.

7.   The method of claim 6, wherein signaling the remote call center comprises signaling an automated call distributor to establish the telephone connection with a call servicing agent.

8.   The method of claim 7, wherein the call servicing agent is a human operator.

9.   The method of claim 8, further comprising:

        queuing the request for the telephone connection in a queue within the remote call center;

        advancing the request for the telephone connection toward the head of the queue as previously queued requests for telephone connections are serviced; and

        establishing the telephone connection to the human operator in response to the request for the telephone connection reaching the head of the queue.

10.   The method of claim 9, further comprising bridging the call with the telephone connection in the remote call center when the request for the telephone connection in the remote call center has reached the head of the queue.

11.   The method of claim 7, wherein the call is a toll free call.

12.   The method of claim 11, further comprising bridging the toll free call with the telephone connection in the remote call center via a long distance network.

13.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

establishing a proxy call in the remote call center when it is determined that the call needs to be routed to the remote call center; and

bridging the call with the proxy call in the remote call center via a network when the proxy call in the remote call center is about to be served.

14.   The method of claim 13, wherein determining when the proxy call in the remote call center is about to be served comprises receiving, at the local call center, a signal from the remote call center via a data network coupled between the local call center and the remote call center, the signal indicating that the proxy call in the remote call center is about to be served.

15.   The method of claim 13 further comprising storing an entry in a queue in the remote call center to indicate the proxy call in the remote call center, and wherein determining when the proxy call in the remote call center is about to be served comprises determining when the entry in the queue in the remote call center has advanced to a selected position within the queue.

16.   The method of claim 1, wherein executing the interactive application comprises accessing an application server in the remote call center via a data network coupled between the local call center and the remote call center to obtain information useful for servicing the call.

17.   A telephone call handling system comprising:

        a telephony switch coupled to receive a call to the call handling system; and

        a computer telephony server coupled to the telephony switch to detect when the call is received in the telephony switch and to automatically answer the call to determine whether connection to a remote call center is necessary according to interactions between a caller and an interactive application executing on the computer telephony server.

18.   The call handling system of claim 17, wherein the computer telephony server is coupled to the remote call center via a data network.

19.   The call handling system of claim 17, wherein the computer telephony server is configured to issue a request to the remote call center to initiate a proxy call in the remote call center, the proxy call being a request for connection to a human operator that is managed within the remote call center.

20.   The call handling system of claim 19, wherein the computer telephony server is further configured to receive communications via a data network indicating progress of the proxy call in the remote call center and wherein the computer telephony server is further configured to bridge the call with the proxy call in response to receiving an indication that the proxy call is about to be answered by a human operator.